No April Fools Joke—In the evening of April 1st, an Owatonna Police Officer was dispatched to Walmart for a shoplifting in progress. When the officer arrived, he learned that Tina Gilbertson, age 49, concealed some bras in her purse. In addition, a meth pipe that “was her son’s” was also found. Gilbertson admitted to an outstanding warrant out of Ramsey County. When the officer searched her purse incident to arrest, he observed a small purple case that contained a smoking pipe and again asked Gilbertson who the pipe belonged to. She stated it was hers. Upon an inventory search of Gilbertson, Jail staff located a plastic baggie with white powdery residue inside her coat pocket that later tested presumptive positive for methamphetamine. Tina Gilbertson was charged with 5th Degree Controlled Substance—Gross Misdemeanor and Theft—Misdemeanor.

Check Scheme—On March 22nd, OPD received a report of a fraud complaint that originated as a mail theft out of Plymouth, MN. The victim, residing in Plymouth, placed a payment in the mail using a personal check for $22 to the Girl Scouts. The victim learned that the check was stolen from a private mailbox then cashed at Owatonna Walmart the next day for $309.74. The officer investigating obtained surveillance images of the suspect passing the check and a driver’s license number—which did not point to anyone because it was “not on file” through a driver’s license website. The case stalled for lack of suspect identification and was referred to our detective that specializes in organized retail crime, a local initiative called PORTAL or Preventing Organized Retail Theft and Area Loss. The detective was not able to I.D. the suspect but shared the images of the suspect with other police detectives who also specialize in retail crime. A Twin Cities metro police detective identified the suspect from previous cases. The suspect was then located in a county jail for similar financial crimes and check washing instruments. These schemes typically link to numerous incidents and for that reason, the case remains under investigation by multiple agencies so the suspect’s name will not be released at this time, or until a complaint is filed against the suspect. The suspect does not reside in Owatonna or Steele County.

What Does the Owatonna Animal Ordinance Say—The Owatonna Police Department, primarily Community Service Officers, responded to 348 animal calls for service from January 1-March 31, 2017. Below is a short summary of the City of Owatonna animal ordinance or click here then scroll down to Chapter 90 for animal regulations.

- Animals are defined as any domesticated dog or cat.
- Leash Law: are required when animal is in a public park. Animals shall be deemed under control when on premise of its owner, on a leash or accompanied by its owner, if responsive to commands.
- Number in a Household: Dogs—no more than 3. Cats—no more than 5 or a combination of no more than 5.
- Vaccinations: for animals over 5 months of age, the animal must wear a metal rabies vaccination tag, generally booster vaccinations are good for 3 years. Contact your veterinarian.
- Running at Large: Animals are prohibited from running loose in the corporate limits of the city. So, can my cat/dog run loose on my own property? Yes—but when the animal leaves the owners property to pursue whatever they are after, it becomes an animal at large.
- Nuisances: not limited to; frequent barking, running on school grounds, parks, beaches, chasing vehicles, destroying property, and accumulations of manure, refuse or other debris.
- Violations in this chapter are listed as a petty misdemeanor—a fine of not more than $300.